



Background on Intergenerational Poverty

Updated 7.6.16

Background:

In 2012, Utah was asked if it had an intergenerational poverty problem. As the State dived into the data, it was discovered that there is an intergenerational poverty issue in Utah despite the state's strong economic success. Two things then occurred:

1. Legislation was passed requiring the Utah Department of Workforce Services to do the research and build an annual report identifying the key indicators and data.
2. The Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission was created, aligning the major state offices and agencies that work most closely with the children and youth experiencing intergenerational poverty. Commission members include executive directors of the Department of Workforce Services, Department of Health, and Department of Human Services, along with the superintendent of the State Office of Education and administrator of Juvenile Court.

The data first identified that there is a difference between “situational poverty” and “intergenerational poverty.” Understanding the difference is key in figuring out the correct approach and how best to work with families most in need. Majority of individuals utilizing the public welfare system are considered situational. The use is generally temporary based on the situation that led to their need of support. Those considered “intergenerational” receive benefits more long term, as a child and now as an adult.

The priority for Utah is to focus on the children caught in the cycle of poverty and determine the key indicators for child well-being as determined by the data. Four focus areas were identified:

- Early childhood development
- Education
- Family economic stability
- Health

The last four years, critical data has been collected. The gathering of the data is only made possible with the appropriate state agencies building the right memorandum of understandings (MOU) to protect privacy of individuals. These MOUs allow for the data to tell the correct story. The data is now guiding the work and helping elected officials make better decisions in addressing poverty, both at the state and local level.



Background on Intergenerational Poverty

Updated 7.6.16

2016 Efforts:

The Governor's Office is now taking the lead in working closely with the Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission and county leaders in building solutions for addressing intergenerational poverty at the local level. By focusing on intergenerational poverty families, Utah hopes to reduce the number of Utah families in the cycle of poverty, improving their quality of life and helping them become economically stable.

The counties with the greatest percentage of children at risk of remaining in poverty were recently identified by data compiled by the Department of Workforce Services. These counties include: Kane, Washington, Carbon, San Juan, Grand, Millard, Iron, Piute, Sevier and Sanpete.

Due to the impact of intergenerational poverty in the state, Utah Lt. Governor Spencer Cox has personally visited key leaders in each of these counties to encourage them to address intergenerational poverty.

During these meetings, Jon Pierpont, executive director of the Department of Workforce Services, along with Tracy Gruber, senior advisor of the Intergenerational Poverty Initiative, presented county-level data to help local leaders determine the specific needs of each county, within four areas of child well-being.

These initial county meetings with the Lt. Governor were completed in June 2016. The counties are moving forward to form local committees to address intergenerational poverty in their community in support of the commission's goal.